

THE GUILT AND THE CLEANSING

NO. 3056

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1907
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1865

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”
Psalms 51:7

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1937, A Mingled Strain]

YOU know how David had sinned. To the sin of adultery he had added that of murder. David felt like one who was shut out from God and was unworthy to approach Him. He could not be content to remain in such a condition. He longed to be reconciled to God and he remembered that he had sometimes seen a man, who had the leprosy, put out of the city as an unclean person, or he had seen one, who had defiled himself by touching a corpse, shut out for a time from all communion with those who drew near to worship God. “Ah!” he thought, “that is just as I am—I am unworthy to appear before God, for I am spiritually unclean.”

But David had also seen the priest take a basin full of blood and dip hyssop in it—and when the bunch of hyssop had soaked up the blood, he had seen the priest sprinkle the unclean person therewith, and then say to him, “You are clean. You have admittance now to the worship of God. You can mingle with the great congregation—I pronounce you clean through the sprinkled blood.”

And David’s faith, acting upon the telescopic principle, looked far down the ages and he saw the great atoning sacrifice offered upon Calvary, and as he saw the Son of God bleeding for sins which were not His own, he desired that the blood of Christ might be applied to his conscience, feeling that it would take away his defilement, and admit him into the courts of God’s house, and into the love of God’s heart. And so he prayed this prayer, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.”

He felt, too, that sin was a very great defilement—that he was black and filthy—but he knew how he had often, when hunted like a wild goat among the mountains, stooped down to a cooling brook, and washed away the dust and stain of travel in the running water, and his face and hands had been clean again.

And so, bowing down before God, he sees, in the sacrifice of Christ, a cleansing flood, and his desire is expressed in these words, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” The words do not require any exposition—they require application. They do not need to be explained—they need to be offered up to God in prayer by broken-hearted suppliants.

There are two things I shall try to talk about, as God shall help me. The one is, *that sin is a very foul thing*. David says, “Purge me.” “Wash me.” The other is, *that the cleansing must be very great*. This process of sprinkling hyssop and of washing must be very potent, for he says, “I shall be clean.” “I shall be whiter than snow.”

I. First, then, a little about THE DEFILEMENT.

Sometimes it has been asked by unconverted men, “Why do you talk so much about atonement? Why could not God be generous and forgive sin outright? Why should He require the shedding of blood and the endurance of great suffering?” Sinner, if you had a right sense of sin, you would never ask such a question.

In asking that question you speak upon the supposition that God is such a one as yourself. But He hates sin, He sees in sin such loathsomeness as you have never dreamed of. There is, to Him, such

horrible abomination, such a heinousness, such a detestableness, and uncleanness about sin, that He could not pass it by. If He did, He would bring upon His own character the suspicion that He was not holy.

Had God passed by human sin without a substitutionary sacrifice, the seraphim would have suspended their song, “Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts.” The Judge, who winks at sin, is the abettor of sin. If the supreme Ruler does not punish sin, He becomes Himself the patron of all guilt, and sin may take its rest beneath the shadow of His wings.

But it is not so, and sinner, God would have you know, and have angels know—and have devils know, that however lightly any of His creatures may think of sin—and however foolishly simple man may toy with it—He knows what a vile thing it is and He will have no patience with it. “He will by no means spare the guilty.”

I have heard it said, by persons looking at the subject from another point of view, that the preaching of full forgiveness, through the Savior’s blood, to the very chief of sinners, is apt to make men think lightly of sin—that, when we tell them—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment”—*

for every soul that looks at Christ, we do, in effect, find a plaster for men’s wounded consciences, which, when thus healed, will only aid and abet them in going to sin again.

How untrue this is, a moment’s reflection will show you. We tell the sinner that God never does gratuitously pass by a single sin and that pardon never could have come to one man of Adam’s race had it not been procured by the tremendous griefs of the Savior, who stood in men’s stead. Our own belief is that all the proclamations of the law and all the threatenings of judgment that were ever thundered forth by the most Boanerges-like of ministers, never did show man so much the vileness of sin as the preaching of this one great truth—“The Lord hath caused to meet on him the iniquity of us all. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

That is the great condemnation of sin—the Savior’s death. Never is God dressed in such resplendent robes of glorious holiness as when He is smiting sin, as it is laid upon His only-begotten Son. Having lifted it from sinners, and laid it upon Christ, He does not spare it because of the worthiness of the person to whom it is imputed. He smites and crushes it with His full force and fury, till the oppressed victim cries out, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, when JEHOVAH hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”

Let us now turn this subject over a little—the guilt of sin. We think that the atonement sets forth that guilt most thoroughly—let this truth reach the ears of every unpardoned man and woman here. It appears that there is nothing but blood that will ever wash your sin away—the blood of Christ, the blood of God’s dear Son—this cleanses us from all sin, but nothing else can.

The blackness of your sin will appear, then, if you recollect that *all the creatures in the universe could not have taken one of your sins away*. If all the holy angels in heaven had performed the best service that they could render, they could not have taken away even one of your sins. If the great archangel had left his station near the throne of God’s glory, and had been led into a deep abyss of suffering, all that he could have done would not have been a drop in the bucket compared with what would be required to take away one single sin, for sin is such an enormous evil that no created being could remove it.

And even if all the saints on earth could have ceased to sin, and could unceasingly have praised God day and night, yet there is not merit enough in all their songs to blot out one single offense of one single

sinner. No, let me go further. Could your tears, and the tears of all created intelligences, “no respite know,” could the briny drops—

*“For ever flow;
All for sin could not atone.”*

Nay, I will go a step lower. The pains of the damned in hell are no atonement for sin. They suffer in consequence of sin, but no atonement has been made by them, for all they have suffered has not lessened what they have to suffer. And when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled over their poor accursed heads, they will be just as far off having satisfied divine justice as they are now, for sin is such a dreadful thing that even Tophet cannot burn it up, though “the pile thereof is fire and much wood,” and though “the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”

Sin is cast into its flames and men suffer there—but all the burnings of Gehenna never did consume a single sin—and never could. Think of that! Earth, and heaven, and hell could never take away a single sin from a single soul!

None but Christ could do it and even Christ Himself could not do it unless He became a man. It was absolutely necessary that the substitute for human sin should be of the same nature as the offender. Christ must therefore be born of Mary that He might become man. Man must suffer, for man had sinned. As in Adam all died, so in another Adam must all be made alive if they were ever to be made alive at all. They fell by one man, so they must rise by another man, or else never rise.

But even the man Christ Jesus, in association with the Godhead, could not have taken away your sins unless He had died. I never read in Scripture that all that He did in His life could take away sin. The Savior’s life is the robe of righteousness with which His people are covered, but that is not the bath in which they are washed. The whole life of Christ—all His preaching upon the mountains, all His fastings in the wilderness, all His travail in birth for souls, yea, all His bloody sweat, all His scourgings, all the shame and the spitting that He endured, could not have saved your soul, or take away one sin, for it is written, “Without shedding of blood is no remission” of sin.

Think of this, sinner! To take out that one sin of yours, if you had only one sin, the Infinite must become an infant, and the Immortal must yoke Himself with mortality. And then, in that position, and in that condition, He must become “obedient unto death,” or else not one sin on your part could ever be removed from your soul.

But I want you to go with me further than this. Christ Himself, in His death, could not have taken away one sin if it had not been for *the peculiar form of death which He endured*. He had to be crucified, and then Paul could write, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

Christ must, therefore, hang upon a tree that He might be cursed—and there is no man who ever lived who can tell what is meant by that expression—that Christ was cursed. If all the mighty orators who have moved the Christian church at once to tears and to joy, could stand here, I would defy them to weigh this burden of the Lord or estimate its tremendous meaning, “Christ was made a curse for us.”

Christ a curse! JEHOVAH-Tsidkenu a curse! Jesus, the darling of the Father, made a curse! He, who “counted it not robbery to be equal with God,” a curse! O angels, you may well marvel at this mystery, for its astounding depths you cannot fathom! Yet so it is. “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

And this leads me to mention what I think is surely the climax here, that although Christ died the death of the cross, even then *He could not have taken any sin away unless it had been expressly ordained and settled that He therein did Himself take our sin as well as our curse*—and did therein stand before God, though in Himself personally innocent—as if He had been a sinner and there suffer, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

There is that black, that hideous, that damning, that everlasting soul-destroying thing called sin. JEHOVAH-Jesus sees it on His people. He knows that they can never be with Him where He is while

that sin rests on them, and He also knows that there is no way by which they can be freed from it except by His taking it.

Can you picture the scene? He takes that terrible, that cursed, that hell-kindling, that hell-feeding thing, that fuel of the eternal pit, that object of eternal wrath—He takes that sin upon Himself and now what does sin seem to say? It is imputed to Christ and it seems to hide itself behind Christ—and it says to God, “O God, You hate me, but You cannot reach me here. Here I am. I am Your enemy, but there is between us an impassable barrier.”

Now, what will become of sin? Hear this, you sinners who still have your sins resting upon you! What will become of sin? God says, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd.” And the sword did smite Him, so that Christ cried out, “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” And He uttered that dreadful shriek, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” in unutterable depths of anguish, because God had turned away His face, and smitten Him in His fierce anger, pounded Him as in a mortar, trampled on Him as in the wine-press, crushed Him as in the olive-press, broke Him between the upper and the nether millstones of His awful wrath, made Him to drink the whole cup dry, and caused Him to suffer—

*“All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”*

So you see that, before even one sin can be pardoned, Christ must suffer what that sin deserves, or something tantamount thereunto, by which divine holiness shall be cleared of all stain. Then, what an awfully evil thing sin must be!

Yet you will see her standing at the corner of the street, with a smiling face, trying to allure you. But shake your head at her and say, “Nay, nay. The Savior bled because of you.” And you will see sin sparkling in the wine-cup, but look not on it when it is red, and moves itself aright, but say unto it, “O sin, I loathe you, for you did open my Savior’s veins and cause His precious blood to flow.” It is easy to get black by sin, but remember that it is so hard to get clean that only God’s omnipotence, in the person of Christ, could provide a Cleanser for your sins.

And now, sinner, I say this word to you, yet some will go and mock of it. I cannot make you see the filthiness of sin. You think it a mere trifling thing. God Almighty, you say, is very merciful, forgetting how tremendously just He is. But though I cannot make you see sin, yet I can leave this truth with you—you will one day feel what sin means unless you repent of it, for He that spared not His own Son will not spare you.

If the Judge upon the throne smote Christ, who had no sin of His own—smote Him so sternly for other men’s sins—what will He do with you? If He spared not His beloved Son, what will He do with His enemies? If the fire burned up Christ, how will it burn up you? O you who are out of Christ—without God and without hope—what will you do, what will you do when God shall put on His robe of thunder and come forth to deal with you in His wrath? Beware, beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you! “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

I want you to take this prayer now. I have tried to bring out the meaning of it. You are thus black, so pray to God, “Purge me with blood: apply it by Your Holy Spirit, as the priest applied to the leper the blood upon the bunch of hyssop. ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.’”

II. And now we shall have a few words upon THE POWER OF THE CLEANSING.

Whom can it cleanse? That is the first question. David answers it, for he says, “It can cleanse *me*.” He meant himself. I would not exaggerate David’s sin, but it was a very frightful one. What could be more dreadful than for a man so highly-favored, who had so much light, so much communion with God,

and who stood so high as a light in the midst of the nation, to commit two crimes so accursed as those which we must lay at his door—adultery and murder?

While my blood runs chill at the very thought of his having committed them, yet in my soul I am glad that the Holy Spirit ever permitted such a black case to stand on record. What an encouragement to seek pardon it has been to many who have sinned as foully as David did! If you can bend your knee and pray David's prayer, you shall get David's answer. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

What if you have even defiled your neighbor's wife? What if you have even smitten your neighbor to his heart and left him dead upon the earth? These two crimes will damn you to all eternity unless you shall find pardon for them through the blood of Jesus—but there is pardon for them there. If you look up to where that blood is streaming from the hands and feet and side of Jesus. If you trust your broken spirit in His hands, there is pardon for your crimson sins to be had right now.

Is there a harlot here? O poor fallen woman, I pray that Christ may so forgive you that you will wash His feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head! Is there a thief here? Men say that you will never be reclaimed, but I pray the eternal mercy, which saved the dying thief, to save the living thief. Have I any here who have cursed God to His face a thousand times? Return unto your God, for He comes to meet you. Say unto Him, "Father, I have sinned." Bury your head in His bosom. Receive His kiss of forgiveness, for God delights to pardon and to blot out transgression.

Now that He has smitten Christ, He will not smite any sinner who comes to Him through Christ. His wrath is gone and He can now say, "Fury is not in Me." Here, then, is a great wonder—that Christ's precious blood can cleanse the vilest of the vile and you may now pray the prayer of the text, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

From what can it cleanse? I dare not mention every kind of sin, but there is no sin from which it cannot cleanse. What a precious truth that is, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

During this last week, I have been with brother Offord conducting prayer meetings, and he told, one evening, a tale which I made him tell every evening afterwards, for I thought it so good. He said there was a poor man, living in Dartmoor, who had been employed during the summer in looking after horses, and cows, and so on, that were turned out on the moor. He was a perfect heathen and never went to a place of worship, perhaps, since he was a child. For him there was no Sabbath.

After a time, he grew very ill. He was over sixty years of age and having nothing to live upon, he went into the workhouse. While he was there, it pleased the mysterious Spirit to make him uneasy as to his soul. He felt that he must die and the old man had just enough light to let him see that, if he did die, all was wrong with regard to a future state. He had a little grandchild, who lived in a neighboring town—Plymouth, I think it was—and he asked leave for his grandchild to come in every day to see him.

As he was very ill and near death, that was allowed. She came in and he said to her, "Read the Bible to me, dear." She complied and the more she read, the more wretched the old man grew. "Read again," he said. The more she read, the more dark his mind seemed to be with a sense of guilt.

At last, one day, she came to that passage in the first epistle of John—you know it—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Is that there?" he asked. "Yes, grandfather," replied the little girl, "that is there." "Is that there?" "Oh, yes, grandfather, it is there." "Then read it again! Read it again!"

She again read, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "My dear, are you sure it is just like that?" "Yes, grandfather." "Then read it again, dear." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Then," he said, "take my finger and put it on that verse. Is it on that text, child?—is my finger on that blessed text?" "Yes, grandfather." "Then," he said, "tell them," (alluding to his friends) "that I die in the faith of that!"—and he closed his eyes and doubtless entered into eternal rest.

And *I* will die in the faith of that truth, by the grace of God—and so will you, I trust, brethren and sisters, die with your finger on that text, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth *us* from *all* sin."

Oh, it is sweet living, and it is sweet dying, if you can rest there! Now we see, then, that whatever your sins may have been, they are all included in those little words, “*all sin*”—therefore be of good comfort, poor sinner—if you believe in Jesus Christ, you are born of God and His blood cleanses you from all sin.

Another question is, *When will it cleanse?* It will cleanse *now*. It will cleanse at this moment. You remember that it is in the present tense, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son *cleanseth*”—that is to say, just at this particular moment, some three or four minutes to eight o’clock—there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse *now*.

You need not stop till you get home to pray. He who trusts Christ is saved the moment that he trusts. His sin is blotted out the instant that he accepts Christ as his Substitute and justifies God in smiting sin in the person of the Savior. There is efficacy in the blood now. Perhaps there has strayed in here one who says, “It is too late.” Who told you that? Sir, it was the devil—and he was a liar from the beginning.

“Ah!” says another, “but you do not know that I have sinned against light and knowledge.” My dear friend, I do not know how much you have sinned, but I do know that it is written, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him,” and I know that you have not gone beyond the uttermost, so I conclude that He is able to save you—right now, just as you are, standing in yonder crowd, or sitting here in these pews.

Once more—*In what way is Christ able thus to cleanse?* I answer—In a perfect and complete way. David says, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” We do not see snow very often now, but when we did see it last time, what a dazzling whiteness there was upon it! You took a sheet of paper, and laid it upon the snow, and you were perfectly surprised to see the clean, white paper turned yellow or brown in comparison with the snow’s dazzling whiteness.

But David says, “I shall be whiter than snow.” You see, snow is only earthly whiteness, only created whiteness, but the whiteness which Christ gives us, when He washes us in His blood, is divine whiteness. The whiteness is the righteousness of God Himself. Besides, snow soon melts and then, where is the whiteness? The snow and the whiteness run away together, but there is no power in temptation, no power in sin, which is able to stain the whiteness which God gives to a pardoned sinner.

And then snow, especially here in this our smoky city, soon gets brown or black—but this righteousness never will.

*“No age can change its glorious hue;
The robe of Christ is ever new.”*

“And is this perfect whiteness for me?” says one. Yes, for you, if you believe in Jesus. If you were as black as the devil himself, if you did but believe in Jesus, you should be as white as an angel in a moment, because by believing, you accept God’s way of saving souls—and to do this is the greatest thing that can be done.

The Pharisees came to Christ and they said, making a great fuss about their zeal, “Here is our money. Here is our talent. Here is our time—‘what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?’” They opened their ears for His answer and they thought He would say, “Give tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin. Be careful to wash your hands every time you eat. Give your money to the poor. Endow a row of almshouses. Become monks. Lacerate your backs. Tear your flesh,” and so on.

But Jesus said nothing of the kind. They wondered, I have no doubt, what He was going to say and they seemed to be all on tiptoe. “Now He is going to tell us the greatest work that a creature can do.” “What shall we do that we might work the works of God.” He answers them thus—“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”

Ah, then they went away, directly, for no such simple thing, no such humbling thing as this would they do. Perhaps there are some of you who say, “Why don’t you preach morality?” “Talk of morality!” Says Cowper,—

*“O Thou bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love of Thee;”—*

and so indeed it is.

If I were to tell you that I was commissioned by God to say that, if you walked from here to John o’Groat’s House in the cold and wet, bare-footed, and ate nothing on the way but dry bread and drank nothing but water, you should inherit eternal life, you would all be on the road tomorrow morning, if not tonight.

But when I say just this, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” what do you do then? Are you such a fool as to be damned because the way to be saved is too simple? My anger waxes hot against you, that you should play the fool with your own soul and be damned because it is too easy.

Think of a man who has a disease that is killing him and he will not take the medicine because it is too simple. He will not apply to the physician because his terms are too cheap. He will not apply such and such a remedy because it is too simple! Then when that man dies, who can pity him? Did he not reject the remedy from the worst and emptiest of all motives?

“Oh!” says one, “but simple as it is, it seems too hard for me—I cannot believe.” Sinner, what can you not believe? Can you not believe that if Jesus Christ took human sin and was punished for it, God can be just in forgiving it? Why, you *can* surely believe that! You say that you cannot believe, that is, you cannot trust Christ. Why, poor soul, I should find it the hardest work in the world if I were to try not to trust Him, for He is such a precious Savior, such a mighty Savior that I can say, with John Hyatt, that I would not only trust Him with my one soul, but with a million souls if I had them.

Yet it may be that you do not understand what believing is. It is not doing anything. It is leaving off doing. It is just believing that Christ did it all.

*“Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”*

Christ is worthy of being trusted. Rely upon Him. God give you the grace to do so and you are saved.

Remember what we said the other night—there is all the difference in the world between the religion that is made up of, “D-o, do,” and that other religion that is spelt “D-o-n-e, done.” He who has the religion of “It is all done,” loves God out of gratitude and serves Him because he is saved. But he who has the religion of “Do” is always a slave, never gets salvation, but perishes in his doings—as they deserve to do who will look to themselves instead of looking to Christ.

May the Lord now command His own blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 51

May God graciously grant to all of us the grace which shall enable us to enter into the penitential spirit which is so remarkable in this Psalm!

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God,*

He breaks the silence at last and he does so by crying to God for mercy. Before he says anything else, he appeals to this attribute of mercy, which is so glorious a trait in the character of JEHOVAH. And he casts himself, all guilty as he is, upon the absolute mercy of God. “Have mercy upon me, O God,”

1. *According to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

David talks as if the Lord had said to him, “What is the measure of the mercy that you want?” And he knows of nothing by which he can measure it except the boundless and infinite lovingkindness of the Lord. “O God!” he seems to say, “deal out mercy to me according to the measure of Your own boundless nature. Let Your mercy be the only judge of the mercy that I need.”

2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,*

The forgiveness of sin is not enough for the true penitent. He wants the defilement, which he has incurred through sin, also to be removed. If washing will not suffice, he asks the Lord to try any other method that will accomplish the desired end.

2. *And cleanse me from my sin.*

“If fire is needed to purify me, use fire, O Lord, only ‘cleanse me from my sin.’”

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

David felt that there was a multitude of transgressions recorded against him in God’s unerring register, yet he especially realized the guilt of that one sin which Master Trapp calls the devil’s nest-egg, to which so many other sins were added. That first sin was a peculiarly foul one, but he added lying, deception, and murder to it, in order to try to cover it—and thus he made it even greater than it was at first. It was well that he confessed that great sin, which was ever before him.

4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest.*

“The essence, the virus, the climax of my sin consists in its assault upon You, my God. Therefore, O God, if You condemn me, You will be just! There is nothing that can be said against the severest verdict of Your infallible Justice. Yet, O God, I still appeal to Your mercy, and pray You to forgive me, and to put away all my sin!”

5. *Behold,*

David is full of astonishment and amazement. His one great sin has opened his eyes to see the sinfulness of his whole nature.

5. *I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

“I was ‘shapen in iniquity’ when I was shapen, and conceived in sin when I was conceived.” He sees that the sin is in himself, and that it does not happen to him as an accident, but flows from him as naturally as foul water runs from a polluted spring.

6. *Behold,*

Here are more wonders.

6. *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts:*

First he wondered when he saw how sinful he was. Now he wonders as he sees the purity which God demands—“Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.”

6-7. *And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop,*

“O Lord, You have ordained means by which leprous sinners may be cleansed. The outward sign is the bunch of hyssop dipped in sacrificial blood. O Lord, give me in very deed what that sign means! Give me the cleansing influence of the blood of the great sacrifice. ‘Purge me with hyssop.’”

7. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

I cannot help once more remarking, though I have often before made the same observation, that we have here the evidence of wonderful faith on David’s part. He has a very real consciousness of the blackness of his sin, yet he also has a triumphant conviction that God can put that sin away and can make even his defiled nature to become clean and pure—“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness;*

How late in the Psalm that prayer comes! He writes seven verses before he dares to pray for joy and gladness. And those seven verses are all either confessions of sin or petitions for deliverance from sin, and my sinful friend, you must not first seek to get rid of your sorrow, but rather be thankful for your sorrow for sin, and pray that you may never lose that sorrow until you lose the sin that causes it. “Make me to hear joy and gladness;”

8. *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

If God's children fall into sin, the Lord does not wink at their sin, but He chastises them so severely that He sometimes even breaks their bones. But God's pardoning mercy can set those bones and make each broken and mended bone to become a mouth for holy song—"that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

9. *Hide thy face from my sins,*

"Do not look at them, O Lord! Even take pains to put them out of Your sight."

9. *And blot out all mine iniquities.*

"Obliterate them, as though they had been written upon tablets of wax, and You did, with a hot iron, put the whole record of them away—"blot out all mine iniquities."

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God;*

He feels that he needs his Creator to again perform His great creating work. David knows that he needs a clean heart, but he does not ask the Lord to make his heart clean—he knows better than to present that request. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," so David's cry to God is, " 'Create in me a clean heart'—let it be a new creation—give me a new heart and a clean heart."

10. *And renew a right spirit within me.*

There was once a right spirit in man, but through sin, it has lost its beauty, its tenderness, its delicacy, its sensitiveness, its holiness. So each one of us needs to pray, "O God, renew a right spirit within me!"

11. *Cast me not away from thy presence;*

"I cannot bear to be away from Your presence. I must see Your face or I cannot live."

11-13. *And take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

One of our proverbs says, "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." And he who knows by bitter experience what sin is, talks tenderly and sympathetically to his fellow sinners—and God is sure to bless such earnest personal testimony—and so sinners will be constrained to turn unto Him.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation:*

He called his sin by its right name. He knew that he had really been the murderer of Uriah, so he confesses his guilt in all its hideousness. "Deliver me from bloods (see marginal reading), O God, thou God of my salvation." It is remarkable that when David confesses his sin in the strongest language that he can use, he at the same time lays hold upon God with the boldest faith that he can exercise. So, the deeper the sense of sin in us is, the stronger can the grace of God make our faith to be.

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

Should not David have said, "My tongue shall sing aloud of thy *mercy*"? That would have been quite right, yet David knew that God had a way of bestowing His mercy in complete consistency with His righteousness—and this being the more singular part of divine forgiveness, the most astonishing wonder of all, he selects that, and says, "My tongue shall sing aloud of thy *righteousness*."

15. *O Lord, open thou my lips;*

In the eighth verse, he had prayed, "Make me to hear," and now he does as good as say, "Make me to speak." Sin puts all the organs of the human body out of order and grace is needed to put them all right again. "O Lord, open thou my lips."

15-16. *And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice;*

The offering of bulls, and lambs, and rams amid the pomp of priestly ritual. "Thou desirest not sacrifice;"

16-17. *Else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:*

This is all sacrifices put into one, and the man who brings a bleeding heart to God is accepted when the one who brings a bleeding bullock is rejected. But he who brings a bleeding Savior brings the best Sacrifice of all.

17-18. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:*

David seems to say, “Whatever You do with me, O God, do bless Your people!”

18. *Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.*

“My sin has helped to pull them down and so has done great mischief, but O Lord, will You not undo the mischief that I have done and build again the walls of Your Zion?”

19. *Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

Never do men give so freely to the cause of God as when they are rejoicing over pardoned sin. Keep a deep sense of your indebtedness to God alive in your soul and you will feel that you can never do enough for Him who has forgiven you so much.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.